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Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

Provisional

4614th meeting

Monday, 23 September 2002, 4.35 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Tafrov	(Bulgaria)
Members:	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Guinea	Mr. Traoré
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Mauritius	Mr. Koonjul
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir. Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Letter dated 20 September 2002 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/1055)

Note verbale dated 20 September 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/1056)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

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The meeting resumed at 4.35 p.m.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Cyprus, Indonesia, Iraq, Mauritania, Morocco and Nepal, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Zackheos (Cyprus), Mr. Hidayat (Indonesia), Mr. Aldouri (Iraq), Mr. Ould Deddach (Mauritania), Mr. Bennouna (Morocco) and Mr. Sharma (Nepal) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 23 September 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2002/1060 and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that His Excellency Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations, be allowed to participate, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter and rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, in the discussion of the item presently on its agenda."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of the League of the Arab States to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 23 September 2002 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which reads as follows:

> "In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I have the honour to request that I be invited to participate in the debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council."

On previous occasions, the Security Council has extended invitations to representatives of other United Nations bodies in connection with the consideration of matters on its agenda. In accordance with past practice regarding this matter, I propose that the Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Mr. Papa Louis Fall, to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 23 September 2002 from the Chairman of the African Group to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "In my capacity as Chairman of the African Group for the month of September, I have the honour to request authorization for Ambassador Amadou Kébé, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, to intervene in the debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, at the Security Council."

That letter will be published as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/2002/1059.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to Mr. Amadou Kébé.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Kébé to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Bahrain. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): We congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. We are convinced that you will conduct the business of the Council in a wise manner. We also thank you for having convened this urgent meeting at the request of the Arab Group in order to discuss the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

We have learned from the news that, as a result of the siege declared against certain Palestinian villages and towns and because of the curfew that has been imposed, Palestinian students are using underground corridors and storehouses for classrooms. Imagine what kind of lessons they receive under these conditions. We know that a healthy teaching environment means that there will be properly ventilated classrooms, with good natural or artificial light and proper teaching material. This means that even if the lessons are excellent, and however devoted the teacher is, the benefits derived from the lesson will be deficient if the setting is inappropriate.

If this siege goes on, Palestinian youth will develop hatred towards the perpetrators of a siege that they have known since their birth. This hatred could turn into violence, or could be the cause of violence. Furthermore, the Palestinians are witnessing something worse than the first situation. This is the treatment of their President, the symbol of their resistance to the Israeli occupation, around whom the noose is tightening every day, while his offices, where he resides, are being razed by bulldozers. One wing after another is being attacked, as water, electricity and all means of communication are cut off one by one.

Thus, these are two negative aspects of the problem, one pertaining to teaching, the other to politics and security. The two seriously threaten the collapse of the Palestinian Authority's control over its territories in the West Bank and Gaza. Given this situation, talks for a peaceful settlement become an absolute necessity, even if this settlement proves difficult at first. However, we need first to lift the state of siege, to be followed by the withdrawal of the Israeli security forces so that real peace negotiations get under way.

It seems that the current Israeli Government wants no peace. One thing proves this lack of motivation. The Israeli army was supposed to withdraw from Gaza at first, as was announced. However, the plan was not applied, despite the fact that violence had stopped for six weeks.

Numerous experiments have proved that peace comes only through negotiations. It cannot be imposed by force; otherwise it would be an unjust peace. Unfortunately, peace will be possible only if preceded by necessary preliminary steps, such as lifting the siege, withdrawing of the Israeli forces and ending the Israeli occupation. All of this seems out of our grasp right now because of Israeli intransigence.

Israel did not implement any of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations. This in defiance of the will of the international community, whose inability to act has led to Israeli imperialism over the Palestinian people. Israel believes that the use of its military force is part of a war against what is called terrorism, thus exploiting the world's struggle against this phenomenon since the events of 11 September 2001. However, there is a difference between resisting occupation and resisting terrorism.

The Arab countries together want to bring about a just and comprehensive peace in the region, based on international law. This is a strategic option. This policy was made clear in the Arab peace initiative adopted in the Beirut Summit in March of this year. The initiative received broad-based international support. It consists of having Israel withdraw from the occupied Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and giving the Palestinian refugees the right to return to their homeland in return for the recognition by the Arab countries of the State of Israel living in peace, side by side with an independent Palestinian State, within internationally recognized borders. However, thus far this initiative has not met a favourable response from Israel. Indeed, the events that the Palestinians are witnessing on the ground do not show any desire for peace on the part of Israel.

In conclusion, once again, we appeal to the Security Council, the guarantor of peace and security, to carry out the tasks entrusted to it, in order to ensure the implementation of its resolutions, at the forefront of which we find 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002). Furthermore, we urge the Council members to

vote in favour of the Arab draft resolution which is now before them.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Bahrain for his kind words addressed to me.

I now give the floor to Yahya Mahmassani, the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations.

Mr. Mahmassani (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assuming the presidency of the Council for this month. I am confident that you will conduct its proceedings with efficiency and wisdom. I take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador John Negroponte for ably steering the deliberations of the Council last month.

The Council meets today to deliberate on the development of the situation in Ramallah, in the aftermath of the Israeli aggression against President Yasser Arafat at his presidential compound, following a suicide operation inside Israel. The Israeli Government announces daily, whether through its Prime Minister or its public officials, that President Arafat is irrelevant and that the Palestinian Authority is without authority.

If that is the case for Israel, why are the Israeli forces laying siege to Arafat and punishing him by demolishing his presidential compound? The fact of the matter is that the policy of the Israeli Prime Minister has become irrelevant, and that its logic of force and violence over the logic of negotiations has failed. This policy brings killing and destruction to the Palestinian people without realizing peace and security for the Israeli people. The Israeli opinion polls prove this fact. General Amram Mitzna, the mayor of Haifa, expressed this in a statement he made a couple of days ago:

(*spoke in English*)

> "Mr. Sharon is leading Israel to disaster with a policy of force, more force and yet more force".

(*spoke in Arabic*)

After 50 years of war and violence, when will the Government of Israel be convinced that the policy of force and war will not settle the Middle East crisis and that negotiations and the implementation of the resolutions of international legitimacy are the only way for Israel, the State of Palestine and all the other countries of the region to live in peace, security and stability? Israel's violations of international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions have become commonplace, with the killing of women and children, the demolition of homes, expulsions and collective punishment continuing unabatedly as if they were of no concern to anyone. It may be necessary to cite some facts and figures to clarify the dimensions of the heinous Israeli occupation. The following figures might be relevant.

The number of Palestinian martyrs killed by occupation-force bullets between 28 September 2000 and 23 July 2002 was 1,705, in addition to the tens of thousands of people who have been wounded and disabled. The number of detainees held during the same period was 6,000, 1,700 of whom are under administrative detention, meaning that they have not been indicted. And the number of detained children, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is about 600. Scores of houses have been demolished. The total area bulldozed by the occupation authority in Gaza is equivalent to 10 per cent of all agricultural land.

Many new settlements have been established, including 40 since Sharon came to power. Council members recently heard a briefing by Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, about the humiliating situation in the occupied Arab territories.

The crux of the Arab-Israeli conflict is Israel's occupation of Arab territories and its refusal to withdraw to the 4 June 1967 line in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference. As long as the occupation continues, strife will continue, and so will resistance to occupation.

Here, we should be committed to preserving United Nations resolutions and the rules of international law, which make clear the legitimacy of resisting occupation within national borders. The Arab States have opted for peace as a strategic choice, and thus presented the Arab peace initiative at the Beirut Summit. Security Council members and all other States welcomed the Arab initiative, while Israel rejected it and chose the strategy of war.

We have questions for the Security Council. Why are there double standards? Why is Israel allowed to remain above international law and above the United Nations Charter? Why are Security Council resolutions

on Israel not enforced as they are for other countries? Israel has violated 28 of the Council's resolutions. Why does the Council not shoulder its responsibilities? And why does it not put an end to Israel's violations and its defiance of international law? Those questions beg for answers.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States for the kind words he addressed to the presidency.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am pleased, Sir, to see you presiding over the Council this month and would like to thank you for having convened this public meeting on the grave situation in the Palestinian territories.

While the broad repression of the Palestinians in the occupied territories has continued unabated, the recent onslaught by the Israelis against President Arafat's compound in Ramallah is deliberately designed to further deteriorate the situation. Flattening all the buildings in the compound with the sole exception of a wing of an office building, digging a deep trench, running coils of barbed wire and placing explosives, tanks and bulldozers around the main building attest to the expansionist designs of the Israelis.

The shooting and killing of several Palestinian demonstrators, the closure of the East Jerusalem offices of the president of Al-Quds University by the Israeli police, the tightening of curfews on several Palestinian towns and the raids carried out in Tulkarem and in several parts of the Gaza Strip are among other recent repressive measures that followed the raid on the compound.

By launching a new round of violence and by making an issue of the Palestinians in the compound, Mr. Sharon seeks to sabotage any effort to develop a road map for establishing a Palestinian State. In the past several weeks of relative calm in the occupied territories, the Israelis never stopped their campaign. They kept up their attacks, including the bombing of a Palestinian school. Tight closures and curfew regulations continued unabated. Settlement building activities went on ceaselessly. In other words, the Israelis were deliberately seeking to provoke a response, thereby to find yet another excuse to derail any effort that might one day lead to the restoration of Palestinian national rights.

Throughout the ongoing conflict, Mr. Sharon has demonstrated that he continues to have his longstanding agenda; he spares no effort and misses no opportunity to push ahead with it. That agenda seeks to squash the Palestinians and to conquer them completely. The basic strategy upon which the agenda is predicated is to make the Palestinians capitulate fully and to have them renounce their basic legitimate national rights. The ongoing siege of President Arafat's compound and what preceded it in the past several weeks confirm once again the view that he does not believe in a negotiated settlement. Nor did his predecessors really believe in the peace process, for they ceaselessly expanded settlement activity on the very lands from which they ostensibly negotiated the withdrawal.

In the midst of tragic events taking place in the course of this ongoing conflict, the international community must contemplate the reasons that prompt Palestinian teenagers and youngsters, who normally should see a bright future ahead, to sacrifice their lives. It should be borne in mind that the exceptional nature of the response demonstrates the exceptionally ruthless nature of the crimes committed against the Palestinian people over a very long period of time — crimes that by any measure are unprecedented even in comparison with similar instances in the colonial era.

Israel continues to flout all provisions of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, particularly those banning indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force and the humiliating treatment of civilian populations. It is also adamant in showing contempt for the recent resolutions of the Council, which stipulate its withdrawal from the re-occupied lands. We believe that the Security Council should not stand idly by and let its authority erode.

It is time for the Council to act more resolutely and demand full compliance with its resolutions. It is very unfortunate that those who sometimes stretch Council resolutions to advance their interests have no qualms about seeing the flouting of the letter and the spirit of clear-cut resolutions on the Palestinian question.

There is no doubt that selective enforcement of Security Council resolutions has an adverse impact on the authority of the Council and thereby undermines the overall international security system. It is also time for the Council to seriously consider the establishment of an international force to provide basic protection for defenceless Palestinian civilians.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Cuba. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are gratified, Sir, to see you presiding over the Security Council, and we wish you the greatest success.

For the third time in less than six months Israeli tanks and bulldozers have once again broken into the facilities of the Palestinian National Authority in Ramallah. This time, they have virtually destroyed everything, toppling buildings, cutting off water and electricity and keeping President Arafat and a group of his men under siege and in danger of losing their lives.

It is no secret to anyone that the Government of Israel's open defiance of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions the rules of international law is in good measure the result of the Security Council's passivity and failure to act. It is the result of the arbitrary use of the powers and prerogatives of a permanent member which, with its vetoes and threats of a veto has prevented the Security Council from fulfilling its mandate.

The world super-Power is determined to unleash a war against Iraq, whether by imposing it on the Security Council or acting unilaterally, as was reiterated by President Bush in Trenton, New Jersey, a few hours ago; it is preparing a dossier of that country's violations of Security Council resolutions, with which it seeks to attempt to justify its plans for military action.

Why does the United States not prepare a dossier of Israel's many flagrant violations of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions? Why does it act so different in one case than in the other? It would seem essential for the Security Council, in the days to come, to convene a debate like this one on the question of Iraq and to cease its usual secret gatherings on a topic that is on the front pages of every newspaper.

If the United States is truly worried about the supposed presence of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, why does it not demand of Israel that it immediately destroy those it possesses? Now they are attempting to explain that the credibility of the United Nations is at stake if the Organization does not support the new doctrine of preventive war. But by what moral right does a country speak of credibility when that country, using the anachronistic, undemocratic privilege of the veto has, for many years — 25 times — prevented this body from fulfilling its mandate on the question of Palestine? When they do not veto, they only permit the adoption of timid resolutions that say little and are implemented even less.

In Conference Room 4 of this building, the International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People is taking place, bringing together 159 non-governmental organizations and 26 experts from all the world, including Israel. They have not shown special interest in what is happening here. They know that nothing will be done and that the Security Council will not listen to them. There, the Security Council simply lacks credibility.

In the meantime, the Palestinian people continue to be completely unprotected. This organ has not even been able to seriously consider the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a multinational force in the occupied territories. We reiterate that the United States must immediately suspend its financial support for military purposes and its military supplies for Israel, including tanks, helicopters, missiles and aircraft that are being used against civilians.

State terrorism unleashed by Israel must come to an end. The flagrant, systematic and massive violation of the human rights, including the right to life, of the Palestinian people, must be halted. The repression, torture and demolition of homes must come to and end. The illegal occupation of Palestinian territory must end.

Innocent Israeli civilians are also unfortunate victims of the spiral of violence and terror unleashed by the policies of their Government. We demand that the Government of Israel withdraw its troops immediately from the facilities of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah and that it immediately cease

the encirclement of President Arafat and his men. We demand also a halt to the repression of the Palestinian population, which has come out in the streets in several cities to protest these new actions of the Israeli Government.

Cuba will not waiver in denouncing the crimes committed against the Arab peoples, in particular the Palestinian people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Cuba for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Malaysia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): Allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month and to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Negroponte of the United States, for his stewardship of the Council last month.

My delegation wishes to thank you and Council members for convening this urgent meeting of the Council to consider the grave situation in Palestine. We thank Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process for his extremely useful briefing on the situation, given in this Chamber last Friday.

We are equally grateful to the Secretary-General for his important statement to the Council this morning. We hope that his thoughtful words will not have fallen on deaf ears.

We are dismayed that after some six weeks of relative calm, violence has erupted again, resulting in the taking of innocent lives. Malaysia condemns these acts of violence and deeply regrets the loss of innocent lives on both sides of the conflict. Such actions serve no purpose other than inflaming an already volatile situation. In the current situation in Palestine and the precarious and potentially explosive situation in the Middle East, amidst the rumbling of a possible war in the region, every effort should be made by all the parties concerned towards de-escalating tension and restarting dialogue and negotiation.

My delegation strongly condemns the brutal military assault and siege on the headquarters of President Yasser Arafat in Ramallah. Those actions are completely uncalled for. They have placed President Arafat in serious danger and have further undermined his reform efforts. It is disingenuous on the part of Israel to blame President Arafat for the suicide bombings and activities of Palestinian militancy when for many months now the Israel Defence Forces have held sway in the occupied territories, with President Arafat a virtual prisoner and with his every act and movement closely monitored. It is also unfair to make Mr. Arafat accountable for every suicide bombing that occurs, as if he controlled the bombers' every action and intention.

While it is convenient for those who dislike Mr. Arafat to blame him, it is obvious that he cannot be an effective leader when his ability to exercise power and authority is being systematically undermined, eroded and shackled by Israeli operations and restrictions. President Arafat himself has repeatedly condemned attacks against Israeli civilians and has declared such attacks as harmful to the Palestinian cause. Clearly, those actions against President Arafat are intended to harass and intimidate him into submission and to destroy the symbol and hope of the Palestinian people that he represents to his people and the entire international community. Israel cannot hope to break the indomitable spirit of the Palestinian people and their leadership, as represented by President Arafat, their democratically elected leader. If Israel sincerely seeks peace with the Palestinians, it must abandon those tactics of terror in favour of constructive dialogue and engagement with them. Israel's tactics make a mockery of Mr. Sharon's claim to be a "man of peace".

Violence does not happen in a vacuum. It must be seen and understood in its proper context. In the context of Palestine, it is the continued occupation of Palestinian land by the Israeli occupying forces, the demolition of Palestinians' homes, the devastation of their towns and cities, the destruction of their livelihood and institutions, the frequent and prolonged curfews and, worst of all, the loss of thousands of civilian lives through the ruthless and indiscriminate use of force by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). The continued terrorizing of the Palestinian people by the IDF — such as firing into a crowd of school children in the Amari refugee camp last week, which resulted in the killing of a nine-year-old boy — will only provoke violence rather than quell it. Clearly, terror begets terror and the spiral of violence will continue unabated

unless serious efforts are made to stop this deadly pattern of tit-for-tat retaliation.

The recent spate of violence is a wake-up call to the international community, particularly those entrusted with special responsibility to restart the peace process. Events of recent days remind us that, notwithstanding our preoccupation with other equally important concerns elsewhere, the long-standing and unresolved issue of Palestine demands our immediate and undivided attention.

My delegation believes that as long as this issue is unresolved it will remain the root cause of much of the violence in the Middle East. The international community and the United Nations cannot afford to allow this issue to remain unresolved indefinitely. As the Secretary-General himself has pointed out, the increase in tension in the Middle East, due to the issue of Iraq, increases the need for and the importance of rapid positive movement on the Israeli-Palestinian track.

As was pointed out by Mr. Roed-Larsen in his briefing last Friday, the six weeks prior to the most recent suicide bombings had been notably quiet on the Palestinian side, despite many actions taken against the Palestinians. IDF operations continued, however, including widespread arrests and assassinations, as well as a tightened closure regime and curfews. Those deliberate and provocative acts by Israel at a time of internal debate among the Palestinians on the utility of violence in their struggle and amid serious efforts to implement a security agreement, reflect Israel's complete lack of interest in and disdain for resolving the conflict through dialogue and negotiations. It is most regrettable that the serious efforts of the Palestinians to restore calm and security have not received a positive response from the Israeli side; instead, they are being rebuffed and undermined at every turn.

We must not to allow the issue of Iraq, which is currently high on the Council's agenda, to be used as a pretext or excuse by Israel to intensify its practice of State terrorism against the Palestinian people. The renewed violence convinces us more than ever before that only an interposing international protection mechanism can monitor the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, as well as provide much-needed protection to the Palestinian people. We fully support the Secretary-General's recommendation for the deployment of an international protection force, which Malaysia itself had advocated during its membership of the Council two years ago. Only forcible separation of the two peoples by a strong United Nations force could provide the necessary peace and security that would allow both parties to resume negotiations. We remain convinced that if this had been done, much of the current violence could have been avoided.

We remain concerned over the dire and deteriorating humanitarian situation on the ground. We have been forewarned that the crisis might spiral out of control within months, with 50 per cent of the population dependant on food handouts and with malnutrition and water-borne diseases spreading. The economic situation has also worsened. Ironically, despite its outward expression of concern at the Palestinian plight, which is its own doing, Israel has not seriously undertaken any effort to improve or assist in alleviating the humanitarian crisis. My delegation condemns the restrictive measures by Israel that have aggravated the situation of the already overwrought population living in the occupied Palestinian territories. We welcome the efforts of the Quartet and other countries, as well as international agencies, in addressing the humanitarian situation.

We believe an independent Palestinian State is inevitable, and we look forward to its realization within the targeted three-year period, at the very latest. In that regard, we welcome the Quartet's three-phase plan of action, or road map, for achieving a two-State solution. We also welcome its plan to establish a third-party mechanism to monitor and assess progress on forward movement in the implementation of the road map. We hope that the assessment will be fair and impartial. The onus of achieving the targets of the road map must also be equal on both sides.

Malaysia's position on the question of Palestine has often been repeated in the Council. We believe the solution lies in the realization of the vision contained in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), in which two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognized borders. Malaysia reiterates its support for the Arab peace initiative and the important efforts of the Quartet as well as other interested parties and looks forward to the implementation of initiatives to resume the peace process.

My delegation would once again urge the Council to take a more active role in efforts to find a permanent settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, based on the relevant resolutions of the Council, in the interest of peace and stability in the region and of enhancing its own credibility. Much is said these days about the need for the United Nations, in particular the Council, to enhance its credibility by following up on its resolutions. We fully agree with that. The onus is on each and every member of the Council. However, in implementing its resolutions, the Council must ensure consistency and even-handedness in respect of all its resolutions, including those pertaining to the question of Palestine, which have been ignored by Israel with impunity. A selective approach by the Council will only undermine its credibility.

My delegation looks forward to the Council enhancing its credibility, beginning by meeting its responsibility with regard to the Palestinian issue. A real beginning in that direction would be for the Council to support the draft resolution before it. Failure to do so would ensure not enhanced credibility, which we all seek, but the Council's continued ineffectiveness on this issue.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Malaysia for the kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Denmark. I invite her to take a seat at the Council table and to make her statement.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein align themselves with this statement.

Until a few days ago, six weeks had gone by without Israeli civilian casualties inside Green Line Israel. This period of calm was shattered by renewed acts of terror. The European Union condemns unreservedly the suicide bombing attacks in Umm el-Fahm and Tel Aviv, in which six Israelis were killed and many more injured.

Likewise, our hearts go out to the Palestinian children — and to their parents — who suffered a bomb attack in the schoolyard of Zeif Yatta elementary school in Hebron. Deliberately targeting children in their schools is a particularly odious act.

The European Union deplores the fact that civilians on both sides continue to suffer from violence: horror and terror for ordinary people in the streets of Israel, and the brutality of occupation for the ordinary people in the Palestinian territories.

The European Union is deeply concerned by the deployment of Israeli tanks in Ramallah and in the north of the Gaza Strip, and by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) shelling and destruction of Chairman Arafat's headquarters. Restricting the freedom of movement of the Palestinian leadership does not contribute to fighting terror, to Israel's legitimate security concerns, or to the necessary process of Palestinian reforms supported by the international community, including, not least, the Quartet. Israel must stop the occupation of Chairman Arafat's headquarters, and Chairman Arafat must do his utmost to stop the terror.

These events take place at a time when there had been some hope that resumed contacts between the parties could restart the political process. The European Union strongly calls on both sides to show their commitment to peace by acting with maximum restraint. Force cannot defeat force.

The European Union has therefore welcomed the promise by Fatah that it will prevent any attacks against Israeli civilians and the fact that it has called on other Palestinian groups to do likewise. We strongly reiterate that call. The terrorists must not be allowed to derail the aspirations of the many who support peace in the Middle East.

The European Union recalls the recent statement by the Middle East Quartet, at its meeting on 17 September in New York, in which the violence and terror in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was deplored and condemned, and in which the expectations of the international community with respect to the return to the path of peace in the conflict were laid out.

The European Union once again confirms its strong will to stand by those who seek permanent peace and security. We will continue to work relentlessly with

the regional parties and within the Middle East Quartet towards that goal.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Tunisia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mejdoub (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are profoundly disquieted and concerned to see Israel using provocation and military escalation while many peace-loving international parties are trying to rebuild following the serious damage inflicted on many Palestinian reoccupied towns by the Israeli military action.

This is a clear attempt to demolish what remains of the infrastructure of the Palestinian Authority and its institutions and clear evidence of Israel's insistence on committing further crimes against the defenceless Palestinian people. It is clear that Israel is stubbornly and intransigently persisting in impeding peace efforts intended to defuse tension and to create conditions conducive to a resumption of the political dialogue and to a return to negotiations.

Notwithstanding all of the efforts made by the Palestinian side to show good faith and good intentions and to reform its institutions in keeping with the vision and the requirements of influential international parties, and despite the calm we had seen in the past six weeks, Israel has continued to perpetrate barbaric military actions against innocent Palestinian civilians.

Israel has not stopped its harassment of the legitimate President of Palestine, President Arafat. It has imposed a humiliating state of siege on him and has destroyed his headquarters. The Israeli Government has turned its back on all peace initiatives, including the Arab peace initiative that was adopted and endorsed at the Beirut Summit, whereas the Palestinian and all Arab countries remain committed to peace as a strategic choice.

Tunisia condemns Israel's persistence in imposing a state of siege on the legitimate President of Palestine, President Arafat. It condemns Israel's continued implementation of a calculated and systematic policy against defenceless Palestinian civilians in order to starve them and to oust them from their lands, in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and of relevant international instruments, mores and ethics.

We condemn this persistence and call on the international community to urge Israel immediately to comply in full and without conditions with Security Council resolutions 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002); immediately to withdraw from all reoccupied Palestinian towns; to return to the status quo of before 20 September 2000; and to put an end to its futile policy, which is fed by a short-term political vision that merely broadens the scope of the violence and fuels resentment and a thirst for vengeance.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution will be impossible as long as the security imperative continues to be considered paramount. We need to work in parallel in all other areas, including the political and economic fields, so as to deal immediately with the humanitarian situation, which continues to deteriorate in the Palestinian towns and villages that have been reoccupied, in order thus to give rise to some hope and to avoid a deadlock.

The brutality and daily acts of aggression suffered by Palestinian civilians at the hands of the Israeli occupying forces impel us today to reaffirm the proposal made at the Cairo Summit by President Ben Ali of Tunisia to establish a mechanism to protect the Palestinian people from Israeli practices and violations.

We are profoundly convinced that the delicate international situation today requires the international community to step up its efforts to facilitate a return by both parties to the negotiating table in order to enshrine the vision of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side within secure and recognized borders. The international community should also redouble its efforts to make Israel withdraw from the occupied Arab territories, to observe international law in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and to base its actions on the Madrid terms of reference and the principle of land for peace.

(spoke in French)

In calling for this meeting of the Security Council, the Arab Group wanted the international community to be seized of the inadmissible behaviour of the State and the army of Israel. A legitimate complaint by the Palestinian Authority has been placed before the Council and it calls for the *minimum minimorum*. That entails an immediate halt to the punitive operations organized by a Member of the

United Nations in disregard of the Charter itself; respect for the symbol of the Palestinian national struggle — President Arafat, whose life is being threatened; withdrawal by the occupying forces to the positions held prior to September 2000; and accelerated peace efforts by all international actors. None of that is cause for reservations. As we have in recent times constantly referred to the need for unity in the Council, let us demonstrate the solidarity of the international community even if we know that, unfortunately, Israel will ignore this admonition with total impunity.

What disgusts the Arab world, and indeed the Muslim world, is the policy of double standards to which it is subjected daily. All peoples of common sense in the world have strongly condemned the crimes of 11 September 2001. But when it comes to the ills that beset our region, people are silent. This is what Robert Fisk wrote in *The Independent* on 11 September 2002:

(spoke in English)

> "Today, 11 September, our newspapers and our television screens are filled with the baleful images of those two towers and their biblical descent. We will remember and honour the thousands who died. But in just five days' time, Palestinians will remember their September massacre of 1982. Will a single candle be lit for them in the West? Will there be a single memorial service? Will a single ... newspaper dare to recall this atrocity? Will a single ... newspaper commemorate the twentieth anniversary of these mass killings of 1,700 innocents? Do I even need to give the answer?"

(spoke in French)

Rest assured that we are realistic people and that we know that it is pointless to seek condemnation of Israel by the Security Council. The draft resolution before the Council expresses the hope that the Council will request Israel to behave like a civilized country. Its people are intelligent enough to understand that their soldiers and their Prime Minister have gone too far and that that is not in the interests of a country that will one day have to live in peace and harmony with its Arab neighbours. The Arab Summit held in Beirut made Israel a historic offer. Tel Aviv should seize that opportunity, sooner rather than later, to finally resolve the painful Israeli-Arab conflict.

As far as the members of the Security Council are concerned, their adoption of this draft resolution today would mean that they were helping both parties in a decisive manner. Indeed, the necessary conditions must be created for a resumption of peace talks. In that context, the situation of President Arafat must be resolved as a matter of urgency. His freedom of movement and action must be restored to him.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker is the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Dorda (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): As this is the first time this month that I take the floor in the Security Council, allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. I would also like to thank you for convening this open meeting so that the Council may discharge its responsibilities in full view of the representatives of the international community, on whose behalf it carries out its work.

With regard to the subject under consideration, I shall be very brief in describing the situation so that we can recall the true nature of the issue.

As members are well aware, Palestine was occupied during the period of the British Mandate. The year 1947 witnessed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), on the partition of Palestine. In 1948, the occupying Power established its State in Palestine with invaders who came from all over the world. They were people who were not born there and who can never claim that the land was theirs at any time in history.

Since then, the Zionist objective remained secure and recognized borders. Since then, the declared Arab objective has been the liberation of Palestine — until the catastrophe of 1967. The Israeli objective never changed, while the Arab objective receded shamefully. The goal of the liberation of Palestine was replaced with that of the elimination of the consequences of the aggression of 1967. Then came the 1973 war, which achieved some military victories, but which brought political defeat to the Arabs. Unfortunately, the Arabs accepted this.

Let us consider the Israeli objectives. What is the Zionist concept of Israeli security? As the Council and the whole world can see, it is not the kind of security

that is achieved through documents, conventions, agreements or demilitarized areas. Nor can it be achieved by a multinational force to separate the two warring parties. The Zionist concept of security requires the complete alteration of the military, economic, political, cultural and psychological character of the whole Arab region, creating a situation that would make it impossible for Arabs to assert their historical rights to their land. That has actually been achieved in the case of some Arabs.

What happened in return? The Arabs took further steps towards what was called peace. They agreed to join what was called the peace process. They attended the regional and international conferences of that process. Then they discovered that what was required of them was capitulation — and the declaration of capitulation — not the achievement of peace.

Our Palestinian brothers have suffered greatly. They thought that they, too, could take that route in order to recover a part of their land. What did they obtain? They accepted Oslo, Madrid, Wye Plantation, Camp David and Sharm el-Sheikh: they accepted everything to which they were invited and which they were asked to sign.

What happened, and why did it happen? Some Arabs offered peace initiatives, from Fez to Beirut. What did they receive in return? All the initiatives proposed by the Arabs were rejected. They received nothing in return for all their concessions. All the concessions made by our brothers in Palestine received a negative response. That proves a very important point: the occupying authorities in Palestine do not seek peace; nor do they desire it. They do not even need peace. They seek only destruction and are sabotaging any initiative that aims at making peace in the region.

This is not a figment of my imagination. I am citing Uri Avneri, who, by the way, is not Libyan. He has said that the goal of the occupying authorities in Palestine is simply the destruction of any peace initiative. He said this in his recent article entitled, "How to Torpedo the Saudis". He was referring to the initiative of Prince Abdullah, which was endorsed by the Beirut Summit. We know very well what the Zionist terrorist army did to the Palestinians immediately following that initiative's endorsement at Beirut.

That puts a direct responsibility on the Council. Most unfortunately and regrettably, it condemns the Council. This Council is called the Security Council. Council members have seen what has happened to international peace and security in the region and because of the region. The Council knows everything that has happened, and it has been unable to adopt any resolution. That means that the Council is not free and is not the master of its own affairs. It is not even international: it does not truly serve the cause of international peace and security. That is a fact recognized by all Council members even if they do not admit it. Where is the democracy in the work of the Council? Where is the transparency in the work of the Council? This is the Council's responsibility. If the Council is unable to discharge its responsibility, every people under occupation must have the right to self-defence. That is a historical and God-given right. They must be able to resist those who occupy their land, detain their people, imprison them, send some to meet their maker, send others into exile and destroy homes with their residents inside.

How can we allow those who defend their lands against occupiers to be branded as terrorists? This is warped logic. The terrorist is the one who comes to occupy, to kill, to exile, to imprison and to destroy. That is the real terrorist. Those who have the right to respond in defence of their honour, dignity and land are the occupied, not the occupier.

Do Council members imagine that, in the face of the arrogance of power, we have forgotten the meaning of words and their true weight? Some Arabs are so afraid of death that they have died of fear; they died of their fear to say a single word in self-expression. Since they are dead nevertheless, they might as well speak out.

All of the countries of the world that have suffered colonialism know the meaning of occupation and the importance of martyrdom and self-defence, dignity and freedom. The Palestinians are free to defend themselves. They are not terrorists. The terrorists are those who persist in occupying their lands.

It is now the Council's turn to act. If it is unable to discharge its Charter duties and responsibilities, then at least once it should boldly condemn the aggressor and occupier. We know that the events in Palestine are part and parcel of all the schemes and plans being

prepared for the region as a whole. We are fully aware that all Arabs will be standing in line to be punished one after the other if they do not come to see, before it is too late, that they are all targeted. We believe that they have all now understood and recognized that they are all targets.

I affirm here that it is not always the rulers who make the decisions. There comes a time when the decisions are made by the people. If the masses have been seduced by the illusions of peace and the peace process, we can thank the Zionists for having interrupted that seduction with everything they have done and continue to do. If that should occur, however, the Security Council will have nothing to do.

An Arab poet once said that what is justly ruined can be justly rebuilt. We are awaiting justice and it will not be long in coming. It will not be the Palestinians alone who choose to die — they are already dead anyway. All the inhabitants of the region will become bombs that cannot be stopped so long as their rulers are not up to making the difficult decisions needed to deter aggression, restore dignity and liberate their usurped lands. That day is inexorably coming. I say this not in the interest of endorsing a resolution, but in order to record it for history.

Those who are rising in Palestine are Palestinians. They were not imported. That is an irrefutable sociological fact. The Council has been trivialized by the Zionist authorities, just as they trivialized the entire United Nations when they prevented a Council mission from going to Jenin to discharge its responsibility. What did the Security Council do then? Nothing! It had no reaction. If such an action were taken by an Arab country, the Council would have imposed sanctions under Chapter VII of the Charter. The Zionist authorities have continuously trivialized the Council by failing to comply with any of its resolutions. What is the Council going to do? Arafat and the Palestinians are always the ones who are wronged.

The calculations of history always prevail over those of power and might. Any study of history reveals empires that have risen and subsequently collapsed and disappeared. That is what will happen to those who believe that they can impose their will and ideas on entire peoples, who are created in God's image. When the Libyan people faced Italy, it was the very first occasion on which the aeroplane, a great innovation at that time, was used for military purposes. We resisted, however; we resisted the latest technology of that time with our bare hands and any tools that were available. We lost precisely half the population of our country, but we achieved our freedom, as many others have done. This will happen in Palestine, too. I place these words on record here in the Council so that any future scholar, in considering the Council's activities on this humanitarian question, will find at least one voice that spoke the truth without seeking to conceal it.

When the Council was requested to send observers — mere observers — it failed to do so. It is high time for this Council to recover its prestige and a certain degree of credibility, if it cannot recover it all. I insist on this because we respect this Council and the United Nations. We want to respect international legality, too, but what international legality is there when the United Nations is weak? We want a strong United Nations that stands firm, in accordance with its Charter and the rules of international law — the power of the law, not the law of power.

The Council should reach its decisions through direct dialogue, just as I am speaking here. Decisions should not come in envelopes from capitals under economic and political pressure from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the other international financial institutions, as well as military pressure and threats.

Such resolutions cannot express the will of the international community, on whose behalf we are working. We are making these comments so as to ensure that they will be on record for the benefit of all those who take a keen interest in ensuring that the United Nations and the Security Council are strong — something that we should all support.

I pray to God that representatives will have the courage to tell the truth to their capitals so that one day we will be able to create a strong Security Council and a strong United Nations that will be our refuge against the arrogance of power.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Pakistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Khalid (Pakistan): I should like at the outset to compliment you, Mr. President, on having convened

this important meeting today. I am speaking on behalf of my Permanent Representative who, unfortunately, could not be here today.

September 2002 marks the second anniversary of violence in Palestine — violence triggered by enormous provocation at the Al Aqsa Mosque in 2000. The past two years have witnessed the loss of innocent lives and indiscriminate violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people. The latest in a long series of unabated provocations is the demolition of the Ramallah compound that housed important symbols and elements of the anticipated Palestinian State. It is regrettable that that attack was carried out at a time when the Middle East Quartet had just declared its agreement on a three-phase plan of action for achieving a two-State solution within three years. The Israeli assault — the third since March 2002 — and the decision to completely isolate President Arafat constitute a blatant violation of all norms of international law and further aggravates the tense situation.

Attacks, occupation, re-occupation, humiliation, human rights abuses and the consequent decline in Palestinian living conditions have further darkened the prospects for peace in the Holy Land. The genuine endeavours of the Palestinian people to introduce reforms and political stability in the occupied territories have been met with unabated curfews and closures, which have further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the occupied territories. Ms. Catherine Bertini, the Personal Humanitarian Envoy of the Secretary-General, has reported that the crisis might spiral out of control within months, as about 50 per cent of the Palestinian population is unemployed, while malnutrition and disease are spreading.

Such a situation is likely to cast a dark shadow on international efforts, including those of the Middle East Quartet, to bring peace and security to the Middle East. The occupation forces, it appears, want to submerge even the traces of the derailed peace process in the dust of demolished Palestinian settlements.

Peace is not just the absence of war at the expense of the inalienable rights of the weak. Real and durable peace flows from a state in which people see preserved their fundamental rights, based on justice and equity, and are assured a secure economic and political future. Unfortunately, by failing adequately to address the root cause of the Palestinian problem — that is, the preservation and realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people — peace in the Middle East has been held hostage to an uneasy situation that even a mild trigger could cause to erupt.

The Security Council must be able to ensure an immediate end to the siege of President Arafat's headquarters; the non-negotiability of the fundamental rights of the occupied people, including their right to self-determination; respect for and urgent implementation of Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002); a permanent end to the provocative construction of illegal settlements in the Palestinian territories; and the establishment of a mechanism to assign responsibility for the violation of humanitarian law by the occupation forces.

In Palestine as elsewhere, the resolutions of the Security Council must be implemented. Time has come for this Council to reaffirm the Charter obligations of all Member States and ensure the implementation of its own resolutions with out further delay or discrimination.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Pakistan for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Sudan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I would also like to pay tribute to Mr. Negroponte, who presided over the Council's activities during the month of August.

The Council is meeting once again to discuss Israel's contempt for international law. It is truly regrettable that this may not be the last such meeting. With complete impunity, Israel, the usurping occupying force, has persisted in its criminal, brutal acts. Defiance and contempt have become the official policy of the Sharon Government. You, Sir, may recall that this Council has met more than once in the past year as a result of acts such as those that Israel is committing today. The deplorable repetition of this pattern leads us to question the real role of the Security Council, which is supposed to seek to ensure international peace and security.

Does the Council not believe that the continued acts against the Muqata'a in Ramallah threaten international peace and security? Do Council members not believe that something should be done to put an end to continued Israeli aggression and arrogance? Does not the Charter of the United Nations, in particular its Articles 34 and 36, require the Council to adopt adequate measures in such situations? What does the Council expect, now that Israel has tightened its grip on the official headquarters of the Palestinian National Authority, cutting off water, electricity and telephone service from the building? Does the Council not believe that such Israeli actions are serious enough to warrant taking action to put an end to them? And how can we explain the dubious silence about what is happening? Does it reflect a kind of complacency towards the usurper and occupier, or is it an admission of the Council's inability to shoulder its responsibilities under the Charter?

Israel is not only attacking the headquarters of the Palestinian Authority; it is also deliberately and systematically committing aggression against the provisions of the Charter and violating Council resolutions that it does not respect. Israel is confident that the Council will not find ways to enforce those resolutions. The occupying force's belief that it is above the law and the assurances it receives that it will always get the protection it needs prompt Israel to fine-tune its efforts to invent new kinds of violations daily.

Empty expressions of compassion will not go far under such circumstances. The Security Council should shoulder its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. It should take measures to deter Israel, the occupying force, from continuing on the path of violence, injustice and terror, for which all that State's capacities are harnessed. Forcing Israel to withdraw immediately and unconditionally from all Palestinian cities is a step — albeit a first small step — on the road that the Council should take with a view to achieving a just and peaceful settlement of the Middle East crisis. The Council should hasten to adopt the resolution introduced by the Arab Group. That is the least it can do to preserve its authority.

The President: I thank the representative of Sudan for the kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of India. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Nambiar (India): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council during a month charged with a full agenda, coinciding, as it does, with the General Assembly and with the first anniversary of the 11 September attacks. We thank you for convening this emergency open meeting of the Council on the serious situation in the Middle East, which allows us to take stock of the recent developments.

Although in the month leading up to 17 September, 56 Palestinians and five Israelis lost their lives, the six weeks from 4 August to 18 September were unique in that they represented the longest period without a suicide bombing or major Israeli military activity since September 2000. Six weeks of relative quiet in the Middle East gave rise to hopes for the possibility of progress in addressing the conflict raging in the region. The decision of the Quartet, in its meeting of 17 September, to come up with a three-phase road map for achieving a two-State solution within three years, as well as the Quartet's meetings with the Foreign Ministers of countries in the region, were positive signs. Unfortunately, recent developments, including the two suicide attacks inside Israel, the bomb blast in a Palestinian school and subsequent Israeli action in Ramallah, have worked to negate all efforts towards reconciliation.

The reoccupation of the headquarters of the President of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah on 19 September and the wanton destruction of property around the President's headquarters by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) serve no constructive purpose. Israeli forces have also reacted strongly to spontaneous Palestinian protests against Israeli actions in President Arafat's compound, leading to the deaths of more Palestinians and injuries to several others. The incursions of the IDF into Palestinian-controlled areas of Gaza and the reimposition of curfews and closures in all Palestinian cities, with the exception of Bethlehem, have taken the region back to the situation of six weeks ago and have set back the political process.

My Government strongly deplores Israeli retaliatory measures against President Arafat and believes them to be counterproductive. We believe that, far from contributing to Israel's security, they can only jeopardize efforts towards peace. President Arafat remains the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and any attack against him would seriously

undermine ongoing efforts to find a solution to the conflict. We call upon the Israeli Government to completely withdraw its forces from President Arafat's compound forthwith and to work with the Palestinian Authority in de-escalating the situation.

The extent of the continuing humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been highlighted by the Secretary-General's Personal Humanitarian Envoy, Catherine Bertini, who visited the region last August and, more recently, by the release of the report of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator (UNSCO) for the Middle East peace process on the impact of closure and other mobility restrictions on Palestinian productive activities. The UNSCO report shows that the Palestinian economy is in a severe depression, with only international aid stemming a possible total breakdown. According to the report, unemployment in the occupied territories is around 50 per cent and poverty levels have reached 70 per cent in Gaza and 55 per cent in the West Bank, while income losses are estimated at $7.6 million a day, with a total loss of $3.3 billion since October 2000. The Secretary-General has reported that, despite high-level Israeli assurances of increased cooperation with the aid agencies, there have been only marginal improvements on the ground.

We urge the Government of Israel to do all that is possible to alleviate the social and economic plight of the Palestinian population by lifting closures and blockades, by allowing unhindered access to humanitarian supplies and by releasing the balance of funds due to the Palestinian Authority.

The resurgence of violence threatens to derail efforts towards peace, as do the military measures of the IDF. The resumption of suicide bombings by militant groups are an act of random violence designed to torpedo the progress by the parties concerned towards arriving at conciliatory measures. We condemn the suicide bombings and the violence against innocent civilians. It is our belief that no situation, however difficult, can justify acts of violence against innocent civilians, be they Israelis or Palestinians or any other people of the Earth on which we cohabit.

Another crossroad has been reached, requiring another debate in the Security Council on the Bengalese issue. The answer lies in all concerned persevering in their efforts towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict, and in not allowing vested interests to derail a process designed to bring peace, security and economic well-being to an entire generation of people in the region.

India joins the rest of the international community in calling for continued forward movement in realizing the vision of two States, living side by side within secure and recognized boundaries, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002).

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of India for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Saudi Arabia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to wish you every success. My thanks go also to your predecessor, Ambassador John Negroponte, for his work as President of the Council last month.

I thank you, Sir, for convening this emergency meeting to consider the latest developments in the occupied Palestinian territories.

It is quite clear to the international community that the dangerous escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories has continued since the provocative visit by the present Prime Minister of Israel to the Al-Aqsa mosque, accompanied by a large contingent of soldiers, in clear defiance of Arab and Islamic feelings. That ominous visit was the spark that ignited the Palestinian intifada, which is an expression of the Palestinian people's rejection of having its holy sites desecrated.

Since the present Israeli Government came to power, it has accelerated its plan to sabotage any attempt to resume the peace talks and to reach a peaceful settlement that would restore peace and security while providing a just and permanent solution to the problem. It has imposed a suffocating economic siege; restricted the movement of the Palestinians; destroyed houses and institutions; demolished the Palestinian economic infrastructure; destroyed farms; bulldozed fields; uprooted trees; killed children, elderly people, the disabled and women; continued to liquidate political activists and Palestinian leaders; closed

crossing points and international borders; and continued to expand Israeli settlements, while violating the human rights of the Palestinian people and breaching international humanitarian law. As a result, violence has escalated. And each violent act led to another. Much bloodshed and killing ensued.

The Israeli Government has insisted on using excessive force with its entire military arsenal, as a means of killing and destruction. It has adopted this as a method of governing that falls within a systematic policy of targeting the Palestinian people and their leadership. The most recent instance of this is the siege of the headquarters of the Palestinian president, and the threat to bomb the headquarters with all those who are in it to force them to submit to Israeli demands and surrender.

The Israeli security forces continue to interfere in the affairs of the Palestinian Authority, while the Israeli army continues to kill or displace civilians and demolish their houses. Intelligence units have continued their arrests and assassinations pursuant to what the Israeli Chief of Staff has said: that its country aims to abolish what he called the Palestinian cancer and bring about the moral and military defeat of the Palestinians, in order to abolish their rights. All of this has occurred before the eyes of the international community, which has seen all forms of Palestinian struggle as a form of terrorism while seeing Israeli terrorism as legitimate self-defence, contrary to all human ethical values.

The Security Council has a responsibility to face injustice, denial of rights and threats to international peace and security stemming from Israeli practices, which provoke Palestinians and continue to suppress and terrorize them, putting an end to their aspirations. They find nothing before them in terms of dignity, justice and the restoration of their usurped rights, except to use violent acts, which leads in turn to Israeli terrorism.

The international community cannot stand by in the face of the deteriorating situation without doing anything. We should force Israel to stop its practices and its attacks, to submit to the requirements of international humanitarian law, to provide the necessary protection for innocent civilians, and to implement the Fourth Geneva Convention, of 1949.

The siege of President Arafat's headquarters should end, and Israeli forces should withdraw from Palestinian cities to their positions before September 2000. The intervention of the Security Council is no longer for protection, but to put an end to the killing of a whole people and to save it from being expelled from its homeland, along with restoring its usurped rights and putting an end to its humiliation. There is a dire need for intervention by the international community to help both parties to control the worsening situation and to put an end to this spiral of violence and destruction.

The continuing spiral of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories will not be halted unless the Palestinian people regain their legitimate rights, which are endorsed by the entire international community and ratified by international law, and which have become a legal matter pursuant to the agreements made by various Israeli Governments with the Palestinian party.

Concentrating on the security side only has become an obstruction, and not a bridge, to the resumption of political negotiations. It has shown the impotence and futility of Israeli policy, while the Israeli Government's attempt to dictate its conditions and impose its will has led to more bloodshed and more innocent victims.

The fact that the Israeli political discourse is not serious or logical is reflected in its focus on blaming only the Palestinian Authority on security matters. This is at a time when the Israeli occupation forces have undermined the Authority and deprived it of the means to act. Blaming only the Palestinians for security, and making it responsible for the violence and insecurity, is not realistic and does not help to solve the problem. Security must be garnered through mutual commitments and responsibilities.

Security is a comprehensive and integral concept. Being committed to it is the responsibility of all parties. However, that commitment loses its credibility when some are exempt from fulfilling it.

Therefore, we cannot accept the fact that Israel has an exceptional status in the international community, protecting itself under the pretext of security, thus allowing it to transcend international legitimacy and use the policy of force and that of faits accomplis.

Breaking out of the spiral of violence in the region has become an international responsibility, one requiring finding a political settlement based on international legitimacy and leading to Israel's

withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 1967 and to the establishment of a Palestinian State with Eastern Jerusalem as its capital, side by side with the State of Israel and bringing about peace, security and stability for all the peoples of the region. This is what the Arab initiative provides and what the Quartet is trying to achieve.

This urgent demand is not just a Palestinian or an Arab demand. It has increasingly become the demand of the moderate forces of peace in the world, since the current policy of the present Israel Government has shown that security and peace cannot be generated by repression, aggression and coercion and cannot be brought about in the light of injustice and the absence of justice.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Saudi Arabia for the kind words addressed to me.

There are a number of speakers remaining on my list who have not yet taken the floor. With the Council's agreement, I propose now to suspend the meeting. I would like to invite Council members to meet with me in the consultation room in 10 minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 6.35 p.m. and resumed at 8.40 p.m.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Algeria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table.

Mr. Abdallah Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I would, from the outset, like to tell you how gratified I am to see a diplomat with your experience and talent leading the work of the Council during this month of September of living dangerously. I therefore wish you every success in carrying out the task before you. I would also like to say how grateful my delegation is to Ambassador Negroponte for having presided over the Council in a very effective and a distinguished manner.

Just when the United Nations, during the General Debate held at the beginning of every session of the General Assembly, brings together Member States, large and small, to strongly reassert their attachment to the principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter, their commitment to the rules and standards of international law, and their determination to respect and ensure respect for all resolutions of the Security Council at all times and in all places, Israel has once again, with its habitual arrogance fed by the strange complacency demonstrated by our Organization with regard to its activities, chosen this moment to attack what little was left standing after its destructive rage of a few months ago. Israel has now annihilated the last buildings where the Palestinian Authority was doing its best to maintain some sort of appearance of life, while striving to reform the Palestinian institutions, as had been demanded of it.

This obsessive frenzy of Israel and its recourse to disproportionate military means against helpless civilian targets, revealed the nature of the Zionist regime, intoxicated with its military power, and drunk day after day with its inglorious military feats, sure of its impunity.

This shows the stubborn resolve of the Israeli leadership to annihilate every hope of ever re-launching the peace process that Mr. Sharon himself has said has breathed its last. Indeed, there is no doubt this systematic policy of destruction of the buildings and infrastructure of the Palestinian Authority, and the policy of isolating President Arafat is part of a deliberate strategy to completely destroy the momentum of the peace process begun at Madrid.

There also is no doubt that the purpose is to undermine the credibility of the Palestinian Authority, to crush its motivating forces and make it impossible for it to carry out its own commitment to law and order. Then it is blamed for not containing the legitimate resistance of a people that is subjugated, repressed and humiliated on a daily basis by an occupying Power that uses the most sophisticated and devastating weapons against young people who have no shield but their bodies, such as the thirteen-year-old child who was deliberately shot in Nablus, in front of a British volunteer, by an Israeli soldier who had not even been provoked.

In other words, this clearly deliberate Israeli policy attempts to discredit and disqualify the very concept of a viable and responsible Palestinian State, a concept that has been accepted and is demanded today by the international community as a whole, and has also been unanimously endorsed by the Security Council.

What we see today in occupied Palestine is truly a situation of war, rife with danger for the Palestinian people, but also for all other people of the area, where

a war machine endowed with fearful means assails a victimized people and its symbols with unheard of ferocity.

It is incumbent upon the Security Council to put an end to this immediately. Just when the Council is very concerned with having its resolutions respected when they apply to other conflicts, it must act with the same resolve and rigour against a State which is illegally occupying the territory of other States, a country that resorts without restraint to force and threatens its neighbours every day, which shamelessly ignores resolutions of the Security Council, flouts every standard of international law and tramples underfoot the rules of international humanitarian law.

Any reluctance or hesitation on the part of the Council would be a serious failure in terms of its responsibilities and would certainly seriously damage the credibility of the Council, which we want today, more than ever, to see recognized by all and to have its role as guarantor of international peace and security recognized by all.

If we look at the responsibilities incumbent upon the Council in terms of maintaining international peace and security, and the part it must play as the pillar of our collective security, we feel with increasing urgency that the Council must act directly and energetically by immediately condemning these outrageous policies of the Israeli Government, by calling for an immediate stop to the terror campaign and destruction it is carrying out, to require that it withdraw from the Palestinian towns and locations it has been occupying since September 2000, by demanding it respect the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and by making sure, by whatever means are adequate, perhaps by sending international observers, that it see to the protection of the Palestinian population and launch the peace process once again.

Algeria holds this point of view and firmly believes, more than ever, that peace is a strategic choice and there is no alternative to negotiation. Algeria is firmly attached to a peaceful, fair, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict as proposed by the Arab Summit in Beirut based on the implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and resolution 338 (1978), and on the principle of land for peace.

Such a settlement should obviously enable Israel to withdraw from all of the occupied Arab territories, thus opening the way to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Algeria for his statement and the kind words he kindly addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Qatar. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the Council at this extremely important meeting. This meeting is being held under grave circumstances that have deteriorated more than ever before. They call for an immediate intervention by this Council in order to put an end to the Israeli acts of aggression and for the Council to discharge its responsibilities.

We meet today a few days after the beginning of the violent attack carried out by the occupation forces in Ramallah, in particular against the compound of President Arafat, and the remaining buildings of the Palestinian Authority. You are well aware of the events and well aware of the losses to life and property.

The aim is to undermine the Palestinian Authority and Palestine's national security. This is happening at a time when Israel is calling on the Palestinian Authority to deter and stop the suicide bombings and violence. What kind of logic is that? How can the Authority play its role in maintaining security and deterring suicide attacks when Israel is destroying the infrastructure of the Palestinian security forces, apprehending and killing its members?

Israel's justifications for its acts of aggression against Ramallah and the Palestinian Authority compound, using the pretext of the Palestinian Authority's failure to stop the suicide bombings against Israel, are totally unacceptable. First, the magnitude of Israeli aggression — every time and particularly this time — is totally disproportionate to the attacks carried out by suicide bombers. Secondly, no proof has been offered of any involvement by the Palestinian Authority in instigating any suicide bombings, which have been repeatedly condemned by the Authority.

We all reject terrorism and suicide bombings. They take a toll in innocent lives. They are acts that are totally proscribed by all religions and humanitarian

values. But we must stop now and wonder about the reasons and the motives that would lead some groups and individuals to carry out such acts. The answer is simply that occupation, repression, attacks, killings, the demolition of homes, closures and blockades all lead to desperation and thus to acts of suicide. Those who have lost everything, including a dignified life, do not care about sacrificing their own lives, which are unvalued by others. Violence on the Palestinian side is therefore simply a reaction against the arbitrary occupation by the forces of occupation. The spiral of violence thus continues, and it is the innocent on both sides who alone pay the price.

By carrying out repeated massacres and confiscating Palestinian land, Israel proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that it does not wish to travel the path of peace or to accept the Quartet initiative. We view Israel's action as an attempt to kill any serious opportunity for movement towards a comprehensive peace. We view it as an attempt to impede international efforts to arrive at a peaceful settlement based on relevant United Nations resolutions and the principle of land for peace. Destroying the Palestinian Authority's infrastructure or harming its elected President, Yasser Arafat, will not ensure Israel's security. To the contrary, those actions will complicate the situation.

It is frustrating and disappointing to us that for almost two years terrible treatment has been meted out to the Palestinian people by the Israeli occupation forces, without the Security Council taking any tangible steps to put an end to the repression by the occupation forces or to compel Israel to comply with resolutions of international legality.

In that light, and in order for the Security Council to retain its credibility, we believe that the very least the Council should do today is to adopt a resolution binding upon Israel, ordering it to withdraw immediately and unconditionally from Ramallah and to lift its siege against President Arafat and members of the Palestinian Authority.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Indonesia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hidayat (Indonesia): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are fully confident that, under your able leadership and vast experience, the work of the Council will be led to a successful conclusion. Allow me also to extend my delegation's appreciation to you for convening this urgent meeting to consider the continuing grave situation in Palestine.

Indonesia deeply regrets that the situation in the occupied territories has continued to deteriorate following repeated Israeli aggression, incursions and the accompanying widespread arrests, assassinations and destruction. We are particularly concerned at the recent attack and reoccupation of the headquarters of the President of the Palestinian Authority in the city of Ramallah, which began on 19 September 2002. Indeed, the policy of the use of military might not only endangers the personal safety and security of President Arafat; it could also ignite further violence and hence threaten the very future of the peace process. We therefore once again urge Israel to comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions calling on it to immediately withdraw from Palestinian towns and cities and to stop its aggression. In that regard, Indonesia strongly demands an immediate end to the siege of Ramallah.

My delegation is also concerned that the reoccupation of Palestinian cities and the continuing policies of tightened closures, curfews and severe restrictions on the freedom of movement of persons and goods by Israel have further compounded the dire humanitarian crisis, which, as noted in the report of the Personal Humanitarian Envoy of the Secretary-General, Ms. Catherine Bertini, might spiral out of control within months. All those acts, which violate the most basic provisions of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, must be terminated. Unless there is a reversal, the current situation will lead only to further distrust, misery and, probably, even more violence.

It is the responsibility of the international community, and especially the Security Council, to continue the search for the road to peace in the Middle East. To that end, my Government reiterates that the prospect of peace rests on full implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and recognition of the principle of land for peace, which would lead to the realization of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and internationally recognized boundaries.

Needless to say, the situation before the Palestinian people and the Security Council is very serious, and we call on the Council to take appropriate and urgent action to avert further deterioration.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Indonesia for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Cyprus. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Christofides (Cyprus): I have the honour to read out the statement of His Excellency Mr. Sotirios Zackheos, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations.

My delegation has aligned itself with the statement of the European Union. I would like, however, to make the following brief remarks.

The Government of Cyprus has expressed on several occasions its principled position on the Palestinian question.

In particular, we have condemned unequivocally the terrorist acts and suicide bombings, which have resulted in the deaths of Israeli civilians. At the same time, we have pointed out that the continuing occupation, the destruction of the Palestinian infrastructure, the prolonging of the daily suffering of the Palestinians as a result of the closures, curfews, unemployment and the worsening economic situation do not create the necessary climate for reconciliation and regional stability.

We have all along called for restraint and moderation from both sides and implored them to look beyond confrontation and return to the negotiating table, as well as take steps to break the cycle of violence. We share the international community's belief that there can be no military solution or an imposed settlement.

We watched, with great expectations, the cessation of suicide killings for six weeks. We had indeed hoped that this development, despite the continuing Israeli actions that resulted in the loss of lives in the West Bank and Gaza, would have led to intensified moves towards a road map for achieving the goal of the international community for the existence of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders, as envisaged by resolution 1397 (2002). We therefore express our dismay over the recent escalation, following the suicide bombings in Israel and the terrorist attack on a Palestinian school in Hebron.

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus expresses its deep concern over the disproportionate Israeli response and the actions of the Israeli army aimed at the headquarters of President Arafat. We call on Israel to lift its siege without further delay.

We must be frank. We cannot understand how the siege of the Palestinian headquarters and the personal hardship imposed on the elected leader of the Palestinians can lead to an increase in Israeli security or facilitate efforts towards Palestinian reforms which are supported by the international community. We call on Israel to consider the long-term consequences of such actions.

In conclusion, we reiterate the need for the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions, as well as the provisions of the Geneva Conventions. In particular, we express our concern over the killing of children and of unarmed demonstrators.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Nepal. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): Let me congratulate you, Sir, for the outstanding manner in which you have been presiding over the Security Council in the month of September. Your convening of this open debate on the dangerous situation obtaining in the Middle East also deserves our full appreciation.

The escalating cycle of violence in the Middle East has reached new heights in the last few days. In response to two suicide bombings by Palestinian militants that killed six Israeli citizens, the Israeli Defence Forces have mounted a massive retaliatory action, using excessive and disproportionate force. They have laid siege to Palestinian Authority headquarters, razed its buildings to the ground and partially torn down the living quarters of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. His life appears to have been placed in imminent danger by default, if not by design.

The Middle East has been experiencing deep turmoil and an endless spate of violence for quite some time. In an effort to prevent attacks on Israel, the

Israeli Defence Forces have reoccupied the West Bank and destroyed most of the Palestinian security and development infrastructure. Curfews and restrictions have been imposed on Palestinian cities and towns. Consequently, people are living in conditions of profound hardship, without jobs and without incomes. The overall situation in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip remains extremely precarious.

This must change. As the immediate first step, the Israeli Government must withdraw from the occupied territories, stop using excessive force against the Palestinian people and lift the siege of Palestinian towns and cities. It must not do anything that is likely to harm President Arafat personally. Harming him would be an affront to civility and to the human conscience.

Nepal supports the legitimate aspiration of the Palestinian people for a State, for freedom and for progress. We also recognize Israel's right to live in security and to protect its citizens. However, neither side will achieve what it wants by stepping up the violence and further deepening hatred and animosity between the two peoples.

Indeed, there is no military solution to the Middle East problem. Only a fair and just proposal from Israel will generate hope among the Palestinians and provide them incentives to seek a peaceful, negotiated settlement.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority should restore its security and development infrastructures, try to prevent attacks against Israel and promote economic development and social progress for its peoples. The international community must help the Palestinian Authority to rebuild its infrastructure and to get a fair deal from Israel in the negotiations.

The Oslo Accords gave rise to that hope, only to see it dashed in the current cycle of bloodshed. Now the process will have to be built from the ground up once again. Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) and the Quartet agreement of July 2002 provide a way forward for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Nepal values all lives, irrespective of their nationality, race or religion. Geography, as much as history, has put the Israelis and Palestinians together. They will have to learn to live with each other. Violence will only breed violence and hatred.

The Security Council must therefore do everything in its power immediately to stop the ongoing bloodshed, to build bridges between the two peoples and to launch a political process to find a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Nepal for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is Mr. Papa Louis Fall, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Fall (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (*spoke in French*): You are aware how deeply gratified I am, Sir, to see you presiding over the work of the Security Council.

Allow me at the outset to express to you our sincere hopes for success in your term as President of the Council in this particularly busy month of September. To your predecessor, Ambassador John Negroponte, Permanent Representative of the United States, I should like to convey our deep and heartfelt gratitude for the outstanding manner in which he guided the work of the Council last month.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is particularly concerned by the rapid deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. The responsibility for this turn of events devolves first and foremost on the Israeli Government, whose judgement is clouded by the policy of security at all costs, which, as the facts have shown with utter clarity, can only lead to deadlock and to the slippery slope that we all are witnessing today as powerless bystanders.

As the whole world knows, the President of the Palestinian Authority is under siege, cornered in the last ruined building of Ramallah and fully at the mercy of Israeli fire and bulldozers, in living conditions that are disgraceful, to say the least. Together with the European Union and others who have expressed their indignation, including Americans, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People condemns the policy of the occupying Power, just as it condemns the random and targeted attacks and massacres of civilian populations.

We make this energetic condemnation because the subhuman plight imposed on the Palestinian leadership is, paradoxically, a deliberate act by those who suffered so greatly under Nazi barbarism and who still today denounce the altogether intolerable remnants of anti-Semitism. The survivors of the Holocaust must clearly understand that the Israeli Government's choice of brutal force and boundless retaliation in unacceptable conditions of terror, which some would associate with a form of terrorism, cannot advance the cause of peace in the subregion, and even less the security that is the dream of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

With the consent of the President, I would like to endorse the recent exhortation by Monsignor Desmond Tutu, hero of the anti-apartheid struggle and patron of the Holocaust Centre of South Africa:

(*spoke in English*)

> "Israel will never get true security and safety through oppressing another people. True peace can ultimately be built only on justice. Therefore, Israel has three options: revert to the previous stalemated situation, or exterminate all Palestinians, or — I hope — strive for peace based on justice, based on the withdrawal from all the occupied territories and based on the establishment of a viable State on those territories, side by side with Israel, both with secure borders."

(*spoke in French*)

Just as no one can make the sun disappear, Israel's spokesmen and other representatives will never be able to make us forget that the heart of the conflict lies in Israel's perpetuation of its illegal occupation of Palestinian territories and the plethora of illegal acts associated with it. While there is still time, Tel Aviv must recognize that Israel will never live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders as long as Palestine is not free from occupation and colonization. Nothing will succeed in bringing about that peace and security: neither walls, which will fall like the Berlin Wall, nor encirclement and closure, nor wanton arrests of Palestinian activists, nor summary and extrajudicial executions nor, even less, the mass destruction of property, nor economic blockades nor the systematic dismantling of the administration of the Palestinian Authority. Such a policy has no future. Rather, the future lies in a courageous and determined resumption of the peace process on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1397 (2002).

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People once again launches an urgent and heartfelt appeal to the Security Council, the guarantor of peace and international security, to shoulder its historic responsibilities. Posterity will not forgive it for having left unresolved for over 50 years the burning and grievous issue of Palestine. Tomorrow may perhaps be too late to act, when the entire flashpoint of the Middle East — cradle of the three great revealed religions — will have been consigned to the flames. It will be a thousand times more difficult for the Council to act tomorrow than today.

The Committee urgently demands that the occupying Power withdraw immediately and unconditionally from Palestinian territory and that it end its unacceptable siege of the offices of President Arafat. In that regard, our Committee shares the farsighted remarks made here this morning by the Secretary-General, when he said that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be resolved solely by the use of force and that a policy exclusively based on the use of force is doomed to failure. The Committee therefore supports the Saudi initiative endorsed by the Arab Summit held in Beirut, as well as the Quartet's peace plan, which must be implemented without delay.

Through me, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People states and restates its full support for sending an international interposition force to halt the escalation of violence and to protect the lives of Palestinian and Israeli civilians.

According to the report of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Ms. Catherine Bertini, 50 per cent of the Palestinian population depend on international assistance distributed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the World Food Programme. In addition, over 70 per cent of the population of Gaza, and 55 per cent of the population of the West Bank, are living in poverty. In the light of this, and given the rapid deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the field, the Committee urges international bodies to reinforce their assistance to the Palestinian people. The Committee also urges Israel to abide strictly by the relevant provisions of the

Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949.

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate with force and conviction our unequivocal condemnation of terrorism and terrorist acts against innocent civilians, be they Israeli or Palestinian and regardless of circumstances or motives. The suicide acts committed by Palestinian extremists on Israeli territory, which have been resolutely condemned by the Palestinian Authority, can therefore not serve as a pretext or excuse for stubbornly refusing to resume the peace process.

It should therefore be understood that the Committee holds out the sincere hope that the Council will be able to properly assess the seriousness of the situation in the Middle East and to honour the international obligations incumbent upon it under the Charter. Solutions to the crisis exist, and we are aware of them. Let us therefore implement them in the interest of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, in the interest of peace and security throughout the Middle East and in the interest of cooperation and prosperity of the peoples and nations of this sensitive region that history, geography, culture and religion must serve to unite.

I shall end my statement with the prescient remark of Mr. Binyamin Bin Eliezer, the Israeli Minister for Defence, cited in *The New York Times* of 21 September 2002:

(*spoke in English*)

> "Today there are two schools of thought in the Government ... One is to squash the Palestinians and to conquer them completely, and the other realizes that this is the time to hold out a hand and to walk side by side."

(*spoke in French*)

The Committee has no doubt whatever that the allies and other friends of Tel Aviv will be able to convince — I do not say coerce — the Israeli Government to make the right choice, namely, to take the side of those who favour peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Iraq. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin, Sir, by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I believe that your presidency will be successful as the Council is facing extremely difficult circumstances, particularly those under discussion today.

Here we are once again, and I do not believe that it will be the last time. We come to the Security Council and call upon it to discharge its responsibilities and commitments in accordance with its mandate to maintain international peace and security by providing protection for the Palestinian people, since it has not yet done so.

On 19 September 2002, the Zionist occupying forces reoccupied the headquarters and compound of President Arafat. They have destroyed a number of buildings in the compound and killed or injured a number of civilians in a new defiance of international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. It is not the first time that this has happened. The Council has been called upon to protect President Arafat and the Palestinian people several times before today. The Palestinian people, the brethren of the Iraqi people, are experiencing an unprecedented situation, comparable to other situations that humanity has known in different ages, such as the age of colonialism and the era of fascism and nazism.

At a time when the international community is incapable of taking the necessary measures to protect the Palestinian people, the war crimes perpetrated by the forces of the Zionist entity escalate. The tremendous suffering of the Palestinian people continues — for men, women and children, and in all domains of life. We Iraqis know exactly what siege is, as well as curfews, the bulldozing of land, killing, State terrorism, the cutting off of power and water supplies, and the cutting off of food and medicine. These are weapons that have commonly been used against the Palestinian people every hour and minute of the day, in addition to traditional methods and weapons such as bombings by Apache helicopters and United States tanks and armoured vehicles. All the weapons that the Israelis use are from the United States. In full view,

those weapons are being used with unprecedented brutality against an unarmed people.

Despite the fact that the Zionist entity continues its criminal acts, which have been described by many just and fair people as war crimes, crimes against humanity and State terrorism, the international community, including the Security Council, has not been able to stop those crimes or to hold the Zionist aggressor accountable. This is a case of double standards. This new United States doctrine in the United Nations will destroy what is left of the credibility of the Security Council and the United Nations — if they still possessed credibility in the eyes of some.

At a time when we really know that the specific position of one permanent member of the Security Council is not to allow the Council to take a decision on a resolution to halt the aggressor and to order the dispatch of a protection force for the Palestinian people, we are fully confident that the Council will not stay silent. It should shoulder its responsibility in accordance with the Charter.

The Palestinian people's large and spontaneous demonstrations in support of President Arafat in the towns and camps of Palestine during the last two days send a clear message to those who wish to change Governments and Presidents according to their own interests and their own likes and dislikes. Here we have the Palestinian people upholding their President. All the slogans being voiced reflect the strong faith of that people, who clearly insist on President Arafat despite the numerous American and Zionist attempts to apply pressure to replace him. The siege on President Arafat by the Zionist occupying forces is a huge challenge to the resolutions of international law and a flagrant breach of the norms of international humanitarian law and the United Nations Charter.

My delegation believes that silence in the face of such brutal crimes is silence in the face of truth. Therefore, the Security Council has a duty to take the necessary measures to protect this unarmed people and its legitimate leadership from the Zionist machine of war and destruction. This is a historic responsibility, which the Council should undertake.

The draft resolution submitted to the Council by the Arab Group is the bare minimum. It is even less than that. Therefore, any opposition to the draft resolution reflects the policy of might, to which the Security Council should put an end in all circumstances. Otherwise, the pressure will definitely lead to an explosion. It will then be too late, and everyone will be extremely regretful.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Iraq for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Morocco. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Bennouna (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I wish you every success in your endeavours.

Once again, the Council is meeting to consider the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. It does so in the context of the ongoing Israeli escalation and the persistence of the occupying Power in its policy of demolition, murder and daily humiliation of the Palestinian people and their legitimate leadership.

I should like to recall that, immediately after these events, His Majesty King Mohammed VI, in his capacity as Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee, contacted President Yasser Arafat in order to ascertain the details of the Palestinian situation, in particular in the headquarters of the Palestinian President. During that contact, the Morrocan monarch expressed the complete solidarity of the Moroccan people with the Palestinian people and their leadership in the new tragedy imposed upon them by the Israeli occupation.

We have all seen with our own eyes how Israeli bulldozers demolished the corridor separating President Arafat's bedroom from the conference wing of the building. We have all seen how all the buildings surrounding the presidential compound were destroyed. Israel's isolation of the Palestinian President and its demand that he hand over a number of his close associates can be seen only as a continuation of the policy to humiliate the Palestinian leadership and to destroy its legitimacy.

While the international community had thought that such practices were a thing of the past, we find ourselves once again facing the endless series of Israeli provocations, which have naturally led the Palestinians to demonstrate in the streets to express their support for President Arafat. Once again, the response of the

occupying forces was a violent one, leading to the killing of innocent Palestinian civilians.

It is totally unacceptable that, whenever it finds itself facing security problems on its territory, Israel should proceed to attack the Palestinian leadership and to destroy its infrastructure and the modest facilities available to the Palestinian Authority. It is high time that Israel understood that its security is inextricably linked to more serious cooperation with the Palestinian Authority and to its complete respect for the Authority's representatives. It is undeniable that the Palestinian Authority has made genuine efforts in recent weeks towards a far-reaching reform of its structure and the rationalization of its work. A scorched-earth policy has never led to the establishment of lasting peace and security in any part the world.

The Kingdom of Morocco believes that it is indeed high time for the Security Council to discharge its responsibilities at this very delicate juncture in international relations. It will thereby avert a further deterioration of the situation in the Palestinian territories and its repercussions in the rest of the region. The Kingdom of Morocco takes this opportunity to reaffirm its repudiation of all acts of violence that target innocent civilians, by whomsoever committed. It is our hope that the Security Council will condemn such acts and adopt the necessary measures to put an end to them.

The Council is called upon to adopt a resolution to rectify the situation and breathe a breath of hope for peace into the spirits of the peoples of the region, foremost among which are the Palestinian people. We sincerely hope that the Council will crown its deliberations today with the adoption of a resolution that will contribute positively to ending the violence in the region and to the creation of conditions conducive to addressing the deteriorating humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people under the occupation. We further hope that the resolution will restore the negotiations to their proper path.

The Kingdom of Morocco will remain faithful to its commitment to contribute to all serious initiatives aimed at the establishment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East that will ensure the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to the establishment of their independent State, with its capital in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, as well as Israel's withdrawal from the other Arab territories it has occupied since 1967. Such a peace must ensure security for all States and peoples of the region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Morocco for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is Mr. Amadou Kébé, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kébé (*spoke in French*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month and to express our high appreciation for the competent manner in which you have guided the Council's work. We also thank you for having convened this meeting and for having allowed the African Union to speak in this debate.

My organization is here today to bear witness and to add its voice to those of earlier speakers, who, together are endeavouring to avert the dangers that threaten Palestine, the Middle East and the entire world.

My organization has on several occasions addressed the Council in order to sound the alarm — every time the spiralling violence and the political stakes have exceeded what is tolerable and acceptable. Again today the Council must urgently debate the events in Palestine. Thanks to television, we can see, in real time, how the headquarters of the Palestinian Authority are being demolished. We know that that action is not just an attempt to intimidate or a response to suicide attacks, but a well-orchestrated plan, carried out with great care, to try, in one way or another, to eliminate President Yasser Arafat from the political scene, as the Israeli authorities have repeated again and again.

The current situation is extremely dangerous. If nothing is done immediately to put an end to this spiral of confrontation and to bring the two parties to the negotiating table, the international community, through its inaction, will have become complicit in one of the greatest tragedies in history. We will therefore continue to be a prophet of doom in an attempt to prevent a repetition of history in Palestine — a repetition of the tragedies that have occurred, century after century,

because of the silence and cowardice of those who could have taken decisive preventive action.

I should like to take this opportunity to recall the principled position of my organization on the Palestinian question. The African Union unreservedly supports the just and legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people, under the guidance of the Palestine Liberation Organization, to exercise its inalienable national rights, including the right to recover homes and property, as well as the right to self-determination and the right to an independent State on its national land, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

My organization reaffirms its full solidarity and unreserved support for the elected President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Yasser Arafat, the leader whom the Palestinian people freely chose in exercise of their sovereign right.

The African Union also supports all the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, in particular resolution 1397 (2002) of 12 March 2002, which, inter alia, reaffirms the vision of a region in which two States — Israel and Palestine — live side by side, within secure and recognized borders.

Likewise, my organization supports all the initiatives aimed at bringing about a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Here I am thinking of the Mitchell report and the Tenet plan on security, which is designed to put an end to the cycle of violence, as well as of the Arab peace plan published at the Beirut Summit. Finally, and more specifically, I am thinking of the initiatives of the Quartet, which call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, a ceasefire and a return to the negotiating table with a view to bringing about a comprehensive settlement that covers political, economic, humanitarian and institutional aspects of the conflict.

Just as the African Union supports the settlement plan of the Quartet, it also firmly supports the Secretary-General's proposal to set up a multinational force, under Chapter VII of the Charter. The Union believes that the presence of a robust and credible United Nations force would make a positive contribution to the implementation of the Quartet initiatives.

But let us make no mistake: by destroying infrastructures, disrupting structures and institutions and arresting and assassinating Palestinian leaders, Israel is aiming at nothing less than rendering any peace plan inoperative. How can Palestinians possibly fulfil their part of the bargain under the current conditions of massive destruction?

The Palestinian and Israeli peoples have already paid too high a price for a conflict that has lasted far too long. The time has come for the various parties to allow men of goodwill to try to give peace a chance. It is not with tanks, political assassinations or suicide attacks that solutions can be found. We believe that the solution is waiting for us at the negotiating table.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Permanent Observer of the African Union for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Mauritania. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ould Deddach (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are meeting here once again in very difficult circumstances. I should like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for having responded to the appeal of the Arab Group to hold this open meeting of the Security Council to deal with the serious and deteriorating situation in the occupied Arab territories. This meeting is a further example of the importance of implementing resolutions of international legitimacy, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1403 (2002).

It is regrettable that the Council should have to hold successive meetings in order to reaffirm once again the provisions of earlier resolutions or to adopt additional resolutions that would be unnecessary if its earlier resolutions had been implemented.

The current situation threatens to destroy all the advances that have been made on the path of peace, and it is therefore our duty to try to stop the backward movement and continue the peace process. The Council should therefore order an immediate end to the siege imposed on President Arafat and a withdrawal from Palestinian Authority lands, a halt to the destruction of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority and an end to putting the blame on President Arafat, a Nobel Laureate who is deserving of that accolade.

Security Council resolutions have not been implemented and serious humanitarian developments have resulted — since the Palestinian people face a certain humanitarian tragedy unless there is urgent intervention to provide protection for them. These are elements that in fact test the Council's credibility and require it to shoulder its responsibilities, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. It is an utmost priority that the Council ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 in order to enable humanitarian agencies and organizations to freely provide assistance to the brotherly Palestinian people.

We in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania once again reaffirm our full solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people and with its legitimate leader, Yasser Arafat (Abu Amar). We call on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities in the light of the gravity of the situation, which does not allow any form of procrastination, and to adopt the draft resolution submitted to it for consideration.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Mauritania for his kind words addressed to me.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. In conformity with the agreement reached in the course of the Council's prior consultations, I invite members of the Council to return to the Consultation Room to pursue consideration of the matter.

The meeting was suspended at 9.55 p.m.